

ROGERS REPORTS:

Can Raborn Withstand D.C. Jolts?

By WARREN ROGERS

WASHINGTON: This is a city of lightning rods, people who for one reason or another attract the bolts of criticism that crash down from Capitol Hill, the press and other sources.

Secretary of Defense McNamara is one, and retired Adm. William F. "Red" Raborn, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, is another. Even though they share the same fate, on the receiving end of consistent and high-powered jolts, they are about as different as A. C. and D. C.

McNamara, underneath it all a sensitive man, shrugs off criticism with an outward display of calm self-righteousness that usually incites his critics to hit him again. But, then, because he is a "quick study" and far from averse to rattling off figures and statistics which sound good but mean little, he is a whiz at confounding his foes. By the time they catch up with him, the issue involved has become moot, and he has more or less had his way.

Raborn, who has none of McNamara's razzle-dazzle, is currently being clobbered by members of Congress and others who might be described as the "liberal left." Mainly, they hew to the line of non-intervention in Viet Nam, the Dominican Republic or anywhere else, and see the fine Machiavellian hand of the CIA in every maneuver of that sort. Raborn's defense, where McNamara's would be to go on the offensive, is silence, which is no defense at all.



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Raborn became a national figure when he led the Pentagon team that solved the riddle of the Polaris submarine. Development of the then-futuristic concept of a nuclear-powered submarine that could fire medium-range missiles while underwater had eluded the Defense Department under its usual operating procedures. But, in the Eisenhower Administration, the problem was handed to Raborn as a "single manager" with instructions to get the job done. He succeeded, with brilliant results, and the single-manager concept is now followed as a matter of course.

Despite the glamorous results, there is little glamor about this square-rigged, red-faced admiral. He is quiet, plodding, and even inarticulate when required to speak without preparation, as in the inner councils of the President. His is not the kind of personality to evoke the admiring comments on which Washington society dotes.

On top of this, Raborn has made a decision to stay away from the Washington press—not even to see members of that cantankerous establishment on a selective basis. His vow of silence strongly inhibits his social life, for a chance remark at a cocktail party or dinner might soon balloon into a cause celebre, particularly since reporters lack ready access to him for verification purposes.

Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.) has been demanding a Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigation of what the CIA does and how it spends the millions made available to it. McCarthy's gripe is aimed more at the congressional "CIA watchdog" committee, with whose work he is dissatisfied, than at the CIA itself.

But it is one more instance of lightning crackling around Raborn's ears. And in this, the first Washington-type battle of his life, he is continuing to rely on silence as a defense, with the added determination not to quit under fire.

Hearts Headline Service